

HB 4122
Testimony in Opposition
Helle Ruddenklau
Ruddenklau Farms

Chair Fagan and members of the committee,

My name is Helle Ruddenklau and I'm here today to urge a NO on HB 4122. My husband and I have a family farm in Yamhill and Polk counties. We raise 8 - 10 different crops each year which include both GE and non-GE crops. I have a masters in plant breeding and genetics in Crop Science from OSU, and to me, the plant breeding method used to develop a crop is less important than the specific trait that variety contains. For example, we have grown wheat which carries resistance to a certain herbicide. This trait was developed by treating seeds with a mutagen, but by definition this is not a GE crop!

The GE crops we have tried include a small trial with Roundup Ready soybeans. We have also grown Roundup Ready field corn and produce Roundup Ready sugar beet seed.

We are seed growers. That is our specialty. We are acutely aware of the requirements for seed purity and how to maintain those standards. For most seed crops those requirements are laid out in the Certified Seed handbook with specifications for each type of certified seed produced in Oregon. If your neighbor plants a field of the same type as yours, you may have to leave a buffer strip which cannot be marketed with the rest of the seed to ensure the genetic purity of the main lot. This is an economic disadvantage to us, but something which all certified seed growers deal with, and we are not going to get in an argument with our neighbor over it.

For other seed crops we grow, the system is a little different. Well before we started farming, the specialty seed growers in the Willamette Valley got together and agreed to a unique system of pinning to ensure genetic purity of their crops. In our case we grow open pollinated white sprouting radish for the Japanese market. This must be isolated from other radishes. Now that we have grown white radish in a certain area for a number of years we essentially have priority. However, if one year we chose not to grow it, then another farmer or company can come in and pin it for their production. This voluntary, cooperative system has worked remarkably well for many years.

Oregon is currently in the middle of a research program studying the impact of growing canola within the Valley. This has been a contentious issue, but is progressing with the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) overseeing the research and the limited seed production happening as a part of it

As you can see, there are systems already in place to protect specialty seed growers in Oregon. They have been worked out over time to serve the needs of seed growers and protect their markets. Oregon Seed Growers recognize the need to work together and coexist, and over time we have proven we can do that without heavy handed government intervention. If more protection is needed for a certain sub-segment of growers it should be brought up to the ODA. They are the agency equipped with the expertise to handle that task. I request you do not pass this bill, which would negatively impact many specialty seed growers in Oregon by setting up a patchwork of local regulations and playing favorites to only one segment of Oregon's diverse agricultural industry.

